

in making aloja. The chañar ripens before the other two mentioned above and is a sweetish, round, rather small yellow fruit with a stone, which is eaten either raw or cooked. From this fruit arope is made, which is good tasting and has, in local opinion, medicinal qualities for the treatment of coughs and asthma. The chañar tree, while it is young, has leaves and trunk similar to the tamarind; the branches look like those of the eucalyptus. 824

Shortly after the algarrobo pods comes the mistol which is similar to our azufaifo except for this difference: from a mixture of its fruits with algarrobo pod flower, patay is made, and kept in skins and well kneaded. Together with these fruits, sometimes a little earlier, sometimes a little later, all the other fruits ripen -- in the Chaco in the hottest months which are October and December (spring and summer months) and further south, towards Tucumán, in November and February.

Through certain techniques of preservation the Indians are able to prolong the yearly period during which they can feed on this vegetable diet, particularly if the crop has been a good one. The harvest lasts between four and five months and is a time of carnival for the Indians [189]. 251 ●

To preserve the algarrobo pods they build small huts which they place on four posts in order to supply them with proper ventilation and to keep them free of ants and other insects. It is a pleasure to see these little constructions rising above the Indians' huts in the same manner as do our towers. Each camp takes pleasure in having more of these little granaries than do its neighbors. In the same manner do they keep vinal and some roots and fruits which can and should be cooked when dry. 343

When the aloja is ready, which is usually at eleven in the morning, all the men gather about the yuchan container, seated in the Moorish fashion. Then, with two or three long-handled dry gourds they dip out the liquid and pass it around to each other. Meanwhile they talk about their affairs: about wars, the crops, news, odd bits of scandal, and guffaw at any strange happening or quid pro quo. Thus they continue for three, four or more hours. When the liquor is finished they fall upon the solid matter remaining. The women and children take no part in any of this. 273

They set a high value on the algarrobo pod. A famous chief, whom the whites called Granadero (Grenadier guard -- Translator) [521] 824

other tribes have larger flocks and more wives than the rest of their people. It is not a part of the Indian's nature to accumulate property for the future. This habit of living from hand to mouth is the chief reason of the poverty characteristic of the Chaco Indians. Only the women, who are in the first place responsible for the food supply in the house, may save food, at least for the next few days or weeks. The seeds necessary for the next sowing are also guarded by the women.

Among the Chaco Indians there is no law of inheritance, owing to the native custom of destroying a man's property, even his house, after his death.

Honesty is one of the native virtues of the Indians. Among the primitive *Choroti* and *Ashluslay*, who at the time when I travelled in the Chaco were quite unaffected by European civilisation, thefts and other gross crimes were entirely unknown, being prevented by the strong social feeling. Honesty is not only displayed towards fellow-tribesmen, but also towards a stranger and a white man, unless he has through his own conduct forfeited the respect which the primitive Indian, owing to his natural sense of right, would normally have for his property. As a significant proof of this I may mention the following experience which I once had among the Choroti. In April 1912, shortly before I intended to leave these Indians and return to Yacuiba, one of my mules ran away from me and was lost in the forest in the neighbourhood of a Choroti village, and in spite of prolonged searching could not be found. At last I was obliged to leave the village without my mule. At the end of the same year, about eight months later, I again visited these regions and the same Choroti village. My Indian friends at once informed me that some time after I had left, my mule had been caught by some other Choroti Indians and was now being kept in a other village, a few hours walk further off. An Indian was at once sent for the animal, and on the following day the mule was brought and given back to me. The Indians, supposing that I would return some time, had kept the animal, fed it well and taken care of it. It is needless to say that it would have been the easiest thing for them to hide it until I had again left, and to keep it for ever. They however considered it their duty to restore it to its right owner, who was a white friend of theirs. It is also needless to add that had the mule been found by someone of the whites living in these regions, I should never have seen it again.

The savage Indians are frequently accused by the whites of dishonesty. There is, I think, some exaggeration in this; but as a rule however,

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estos indios que están acosados por una situación económica de día en día más difícil y que fuera de las misiones están sometidos a múltiples vejámenes y humillaciones. No obstante no se han observado crisis de suicidio entre los demás indios del Chaco argentino que viven bajo condiciones igualmente desfavorables. Hay también indicios de que los casos de suicidio eran comunes al principio de la era de las misiones y esto puede hacernos suponer que el suicidio era la expresión tradicional de la agresión en contra de los miembros de su grupo contra los cuales el individuo no podía vengarse en otra forma. El ejemplo dado por un suicida se hace contagioso y de allí nacen epidemias esporádicas de envenenamiento.

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The high rate of suicide among the Mataco Indians of the Argentine Gran Chaco is a social phenomenon well worth our attention. In this tribe suicide at times assumes the character of an epidemic that causes havoc among the people and is a serious problem for the English missionaries who have several stations along the Bermejo and Pilcomayo Rivers. To these missionaries, especially to Dr. Collins Smith and J. White, I am indebted for most of my information on the suicidal mania that has flared up on several occasions during the past ten years. Personally, I have witnessed only one case. Information about suicide among the Mataco who live in the bush or as miserable hilotas around the white settlements is not available, but there is little doubt that if the Mataco in the missions are so prone to take their lives, those who find themselves exposed to hunger and mistreatment will be even more inclined to end their days wilfully.

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Suicide among the Mataco takes a strictly patternized form. In all cases known to me, the victims poisoned themselves by eating the fruits of the sachasandía (*Capparis salicifolia* Griseb). This fruit, the size of a walnut, grows on a tree which is very common in the Chaco region between the Bermejo and Pilcomayo Rivers. It ripens in December, the period which coincides with the largest number of suicides. Strangely enough, the sachasandía is also an important food for the chaco Indians; it is collected in the summer, dried in the sun and stored in caraguata bags to be consumed during the lean winter months. Even dried these fruits are extremely poisonous and before eating them the Indians boil them six or seven times in different waters.

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The clinical symptoms of sachasandía poisoning are: convulsions, foaming at the mouth and, finally, coma. The heart beat becomes jerky with short stops and upsurges of activity. The muscles of the throat are affected with paralysis and the patient makes a gurgling sound. When paralysis sets in, no emetic can be taken orally. The last phase of the apnoea is characterized by jumpy motions of the body